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Van Woerkom's Sponsors Bill to Double Michigan's Agricultural Renaissance Zones *SB 163 will increase tax-free zones from ten to twenty*

LANSING – Legislation that would increase the number of Agricultural Renaissance Zones from ten to twenty was considered today by the Senate Agriculture, Forestry and Tourism Committee this morning, bill sponsor and Chairman Gerald Van Woerkom, R-Norton Shores, announced.

“Increasing the number of Agricultural Renaissance Zones would provide more opportunities for working families and help stimulate the economy in West Michigan,” Van Woerkom said. “Agriculture is our second largest industry and Michigan must take action to ensure its future success.”

The Senate Agriculture, Forestry and Tourism Committee considered testimony in support of SB 163 by three of Van Woerkom's local officials: Bill D. Kratz, Mason County Economic Development Corporation; Ron Steiner, Oceana County Economic Development Corporation; and Andy Lofgren, Newaygo County Economic Development Corporation.

In 1997, Michigan became the first state to offer tax-free Renaissance Zones to help increase job opportunities and investments. Agricultural Renaissance Zones were created in 2002, exempting qualified agriculture processors who want to expand or create new businesses in Michigan from all state and local taxes for up to fifteen years. The zones are designed to keep raw commodities in Michigan and improve profitability for Michigan farmers.

NOTE: A downloadable photograph of Senator Van Woerkom with Mr. Kratz, Mr. Steiner and Mr. Lofgren are available on the Michigan Senate Photowire located at <http://www.senate.michigan.gov/gop/photowire/>.